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Maraming-maraming salamat sa inyo.

1 *Dangerous Liaisons*

Sexing the Nation in Novels
by Philippine Women Writers (1993-2006)

TIME AND AGAIN, critics of Philippine literature in English have commented on the nexus between the novel and issues of nationhood or the nation-state. The obduracy of this relationship may be found in discussions of Philippine fiction by such critics as Resil Mojares, NVM Gonzalez, Edel Garcellano, Caroline Hau, and Neferti Tadiar. Though recent developments in fiction—speculative fiction, crime fiction, “chick lit,” and novels that fall under the larger category of “genre fiction”—show a shift in concern among young writers, observations about the Philippine novel in English and its preoccupation with the vagaries of Philippine nationhood, still hold true. The Philippine Centennial Literary Prize competition is perhaps the most indisputable example of how even the state recognizes the “value” of literature in contributing to people’s ideological consciousness of the nation.

But, as Caroline Hau has observed, the Philippine novel is enmeshed in a web of contradictions.¹ Its construction of the nation written as narratives of individual experiences practically *demands* to be deconstructed.

Yet any appraisal of this substantial interest of Philippine fiction in political issues of nationhood must likewise tease out how the discourse of gender is woven into the fabric of the discourse of the nation. This

is an imperative not just because gender is almost by default, cathected with the imagining of the nation, but also because there have been quite a number of Philippine novels authored by Filipino women writers over the past decades. If the novel is the genre through which society has decided to render itself, then it should be of interest to analyze how women writers conceive and construct their society and ultimately, their nation. But this analysis must go beyond the mere identification of female characters and their roles vis-à-vis the nation in the literary texts. More important than simply stating how the Philippine novels in English by women are deeply imbricated in the discourse of the nation is determining whether or not their ideological underpinnings contain the contradictions of the Philippine nation.

The tenacity of the gendered nature of the national discourse is not a recent development, considering the nature of the nation as collectively imagined. Despite arguments about the dissolution of the nation and the precariousness of the concept, we have yet to read a categorical declaration of the "death" of the nation, let alone, the nation-state. And despite the ambiguity and elusiveness of the idea of the nation because of the tectonic shifts in geopolitics, the nation still continues to haunt a multiplicity of Philippine discourses in general, and novels in particular.

I wish to look at Philippine women writers' novels published from 1993-2006, and to attempt to determine whether or not the narrative of the Philippine nation runs through them. Some of the texts will be shown to be more obviously about the nation, while others, not obviously so. But more than just being about the nation, these novels articulate different types of involvement of women in the nation.

I wish to look at how women are discursively deployed in the name of the nation and the nation-state in novels written by these women writers. By "discursive deployment," I refer to how the novels as discourse—in a Foucauldian sense—weave women into their narratives of the nation. Also inspired by Michel Foucault's idea that the "body manifests the stigmata of past experience and also gives rise to desires, failing, and errors," the analysis will show how the discourse of the nation-state is inscripted in the bodies of the female characters in the

novels, and how ultimately, the discourse of the nation-state is linked to the larger narrative of imperialism/globalization. Bearing in mind that "all nationalisms are gendered; all are invented; all are dangerous," we cannot take as given and unproblematic, how novels narrativize the Philippine nation. A "system of cultural representation" enabling people to identify themselves with an experience shared by a community, nations are "historical practices through which social difference is both invented and performed" (McClintock 2004, 89).

Pertinent to a textured understanding of the significance of the body in relation to the narrative of the nation is Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock's classification of the body into three kinds: the individual body, the social body, and the body politic (1998, 348). The individual body is similar to that described by Foucault: it is the site where memory dwells. It is the "lived experience of the body self" (1998, 348).

In the realm of representations, we could refer to Scheper-Hughes and Lock's "social body" which they identify as the representational use of the body as a "natural" symbol that stands for nature, society, and culture (1998, 348). This aspect of the human body reinforces what has been already elaborated on by scholars in various disciplines: that the body is culturally and socially produced. Thus as a social body, the Filipino woman's body is conventionally used as a symbol in discourses such as literature, where it often stands for the Philippine nation.

Lastly, the "body politic" is an echo of Foucault's notion of genealogy which posits the "problem of power and the body [of bodies]" (Flynn 1997, 34). In *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and *History of Sexuality* (1978), Foucault explores the various ways by which the body is subjected to numerous ways of control and punishment. Similarly, Scheper-Hughes and Lock dwell on the relation between power and body when they use the term "body politic" to refer to the "regulation, surveillance and control of bodies" (1998, 348).

This multidimensional appreciation of the body will provide a nuanced view of how the Filipino woman and her body are co-extensive with both the nation and the nation-state. It likewise signals the historicity of the body and how the body shifts in the narratives of

the nation. If we go by Benedict Anderson's claim that the connection between nation and narration is rooted in the construction of identity (2003, 6), then it is important to show how women's identity—as a result of their various insertions in the discourse of the nation—impinges on the narrativization of the nation.

In other words, then, in examining the relationship between nation, narrativity, and gender, I shall ask the following questions: what constructions of the nation are articulated in Philippine novels in English published by women from 1993-2006? How are the women inserted in the narrative of the nation/nation-state? What relations between women/women's bodies and the nation are articulated/inscribed in the novels? What role does the gendered female body play in the perpetuation of the Philippine nation and nation-state in the novels? do these novels engender a weak "feminine" service-oriented nation that feeds into the grand narrative of imperialism/globalization?

I have borrowed my title from Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat's *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, a compilation of essays on colonial discourse, the question of the nation, gender, sexuality, and race within the double context of nationalism and feminism. I share with these critics the belief that the seemingly "natural" relationship between woman and nation is hardly unproblematic.

I see these novels as veiled reminders of how, according to Yuval-Davis, gender relations feed into "several dimensions of national projects: national reproduction, national culture, and national citizenships, as well as national conflicts and wars" (Yuval-Davis 1997, 3), and that the various ways that women are inserted into the narrative of the nation are "as constraining as the tyranny of more primordial loyalties to lineage, tribe or kin . . ." (Kandiyoti 2000, 1490).

After analyzing each novel and laying bare the nexus between woman, nation, and narrative in each text, I shall propose a general theory about Philippine women's fiction over the past thirteen years. I shall not stop with the rigorous examination of the ideological underpinnings of the novels themselves. Based on the answers to the

five questions I have posed, I hope to explore particular issues borne out of interlocking the discourse on the nation and the discourse on women/women's body/gender, i.e., whether or not, in gendering the nation as woman, these Philippine novels have become complicit in suppressing and repressing the contradictions in the discourse of the Philippine nation. In other words, do the novels under study reinforce the engendering of the Philippine nation into a weak "feminine" service-oriented nation even after the granting of formal independence vis-à-vis strong, masculine nations which were its former colonial masters? And, if these novels contain the ideological paradoxes of the nation, do they unwittingly feed into the grand narrative of imperialism/globalization which has established a well-calibrated system of inequality among nation-states?

My earlier study on Martial Law novels (written from 1972-1992) did not focus on women's narratives but on how novels by both men and women provide alternative histories and notions of historiography.² From 1993-2006, there were twenty novels published in the Philippines by Filipino women writers (see appendix A for the list of these novels). I read them all, and then decided to focus on the seven novels whose thematics problematize the categories of Philippine nation/Philippine history, gender/women's bodies: Gina Apostol's *Bibliolepsy*, Merlinda Bobis's *Banana Heart Summer*, Linda Ty-Casper's *Dream Eden*, Cristina Pantoja Hidalgo's *Recuerdo* and *A Book of Dreams*, and Azucena Grajo Urraza's *A Passing Season* and *Women of Tammuz*. After making my selection, I tried to chart the different ways by which the texts problematize the Philippine nation.

The "chart," or a visual overview of the narratives, served as a map of the novels' trajectories which made the analysis easier. I found that some of the novels are similar in the ways they negotiate the issues of nation, nationhood, and women, while others have peculiar and particular ways of resolving these issues.

Some of the novels inscribe within them certain conventional assumptions on the feminine gender of the nation, while others challenge these assumptions in different degrees. Since novels are not homogeneous

Dangerous Liaisons: Sexing the Nation in Novels by Philippine Women Writers (1993-2006)

works but multiply-determined texts with paradoxes and contradictions embedded in the narratives, I will try to tease out the cacophony of discourses of class, race, and of course, gender.

After deconstructing the novels as matrices of crisscrossing and possibly contradictory discourses—with emphasis on how these texts by women problematize/engender the notion of the nation as feminine—I will examine whether or not these novels reinforce the narrative of imperialism in the Philippine context. In other words, do they elide the failure of nations and nation-states; and in doing so, unwittingly strengthen the polarization (i.e., based on gender) between nations in the discourse of imperialism?

Through the years, we have witnessed the onslaught of theorizations on the nation and narration in the field of literary studies, cultural studies, and even in the social sciences, particularly in sociology and history. There are likewise numerous works on the fraught relationship between nation, narration, and gender/women. Scholars from postcolonial nations have written on how gender has been metaphorically glossed over in the predominantly male-oriented/patriarchal discourses—including literature—on the nation. Indeed, women have not just been simply historical subjects of the nation but have likewise been used as symbols of the homeland which in turn have made their insertion into the discourses on nation more problematic. Moreover, women have continued to suffer the Ellisonian fate of invisibility in these discourses on the nation, which is quite ironic considering the persistence through colonial and postcolonial discourses of the woman-as-nation trope. But it is precisely this trope that has made women a “given,” that is, an assumed image whose presence in the discourse is taken as “natural,” which has ultimately made her *invisible*.

My contribution is the interrogation of how women have been conventionally cathected with the discourse of the Philippine nation, and the focus on narratives by women writers. As narratives authored by women, do these novels problematize the conventional patriarchal nexus between nation and gender?

The general observations at the end of the study, my description and explanation of the seven novels, and the possibilities that the form of the novel offers, is my contribution to literary studies in the Philippines.

Although my theoretical framework is informed by numerous concepts and strategies drawn from other critics and scholars (see appendix B for a discussion of the texts of critics/scholars who have worked on the gender-nation-narrative nexus), it would be the works of Deniz Kandiyoti (“Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation,” 2000) and Anne McClintock (“No Longer in a Future Heaven: Gender, Race and Nationalism,” 2004) which I have found most useful in framing the analysis of all the novels in my study. These two essays complement my sustained critique of the gendered nature of narratives of the nation as found in the texts by Philippine women writers in English, 1993-2006.

Kandiyoti’s essay throws into primary relief the contradictory implications of nationalist projects in postcolonial societies and how these affect the rights of women as citizens. Kandiyoti presents the various ways that women are inserted in postcolonial nations, and how the latter, via state and legal administrative apparatus, demand particular forms of loyalties. Her analysis begins with an assumption quite common to a number of views that deal with women and the nation, and this is, that “the integration of women into modern ‘nationhood’, epitomized by citizenship in a sovereign nation-state, somehow follows a *different* trajectory from that of men” (2000, 1490). Because the state has its own hegemonic discourse on gender relations, one must then reckon with the “gender regimes” (i.e., how gender distinctions are used to justify particular state policies, and thus assure the survival of a political regime/nation-state) of nationalist projects and determine how “women can, at the same time, participate actively in, and become hostages to such projects” (2000, 1491). Kandiyoti’s study of women, nationalism, secularism, the politics of modernity and personal laws shows the vagaries of the nationalist discourse nuanced by the “changing portrayals of women as victims of social backwardness, icons of modernity or

privileged bearers of cultural authenticity" (2000, 1492). It also describes the dangers of using woman as an iconic signifier of the nation. In her words,

the identification of women as privileged bearers of corporate identities and boundary markers of their communities has had a deleterious effect on their emergence as full-fledged citizens of modern nation-states. (2000, 1503)

Ultimately, what is revealed in Kandiyoti's critique is the tension that exists in women's relationship to the discourse of nationalism which is either overtly or covertly/implicitly patriarchal. This frisson emerges as the limits of nationalist discourse that pose constraints on women's "claim to enfranchised citizenry" (2000, 1494).

I find Kandiyoti's study very apt for my own project of examining how the selected novels are burdened by traditional and/or hegemonic discourses on both the Filipino and the Philippine nation which use women as important constitutive elements of Filipino and Philippine national identity construction. I want to study how these Philippine novels, as narratives of the nation by women writers, deploy women in the name of the nation/nationalist projects and show women engaged in various stages of nation formation. And I want to determine whether these narratives, in unwittingly eliding the contradictions in the discourse of the nation, also become "hostages to such projects." My study will look into whether or not the rhetorical strategies of the narratives themselves sometimes function to integrate the novels into the larger hegemonic, patriarchal metanarratives of identity/nation formation.

My readings will view the novels as sites of contradictory figurations of the nation—colonial/anticolonial, patriarchal/feminist.

From McClintock, I take the notion that nationalisms are dangerous because "they represent relations to political power and to technologies of violence"; nations are therefore "not simply phantasmagoria of the mind" (2004, 89). Through "social contests," nationalism's gender-inflected discourse is able to constitute identities. Thus, discourses on nations can have "real" effects on the material existence of social beings.

This is what Karl Marx's *German Ideology*, as reread by Louis Althusser, comes to posit:

Ideology (e.g., literature) is not simply a set of illusions . . . but a system of representations (discourses, images, myths) concerning the real relations in which people live. But what is represented in ideology is "not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live." (Althusser 1971, 155 quoted in Belsey 1985, 46)

And as Belsey adds,

Ideology is both a real and an imaginary relation to the world—real in that it is the way in which people really live their relationship to the social relations which govern their conditions of existence, but imaginary in that it discourages a full understanding of these conditions of existence and the ways in which people are socially constituted within them (Belsey 1985, 46)

What I find very relevant to my study of novels by women is McClintock's reference to Cynthia Enloe who claims that "nationalisms have typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized formulation and masculinized hope" (Enloe 44; quoted in McClintock 2004, 89). This critical reading of nationalism sits well with the focus of my study. If nationalism is masculinized, then we as readers must not complacently assume that narratives on the nation written by female writers are necessarily different from the male writers' masculinized renderings of the nation.

Kandiyoti's and McClintock's ideas and assertions will serve as the spine of my analysis. Their arguments will support the numerous assumptions and contentions on the nation, narration, and gender which I will discuss. I have also borrowed from Timothy Brennan's "The National Longing for Form" (2006) which posits that it is particularly in the Third World after the Second World War that the "fictionalness" of the 'nation' and 'nationalism' are most pronounced" (2006, 46;

emphasis mine). Brennan's "fictional use" has two interrelated meanings: the use of nationalism as a trope (i.e., in terms of the craft of fiction) for "belongingness," "bordering," and "commitment," and the "institutional uses of fiction" by nationalist movements (2006, 46). His assertions as regards the "nation" and the Third World artist could very well apply to novels by Filipino writers: the nation as a discursive formation in the Foucauldian sense is "not simply an allegory or imaginative vision, but a gestative political structure which the Third World artist is consciously building or suffering the lack of" (2006, 47).

Brennan's reference to the nation as an "imaginary construct" hinging on an "apparatus of culture fictions in which imaginative literature plays a decisive role" (2006, 49) is directly related to the focus of my study. Although it is Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (2003) which is more often quoted when it comes to the nation as an imagined community, I consider Brennan's formulation of the relationship between the nation and the novel vis-à-vis the rise of European nationalism more tailored to my own concerns: "It was the novel that historically accompanied the rise of nations by objectifying the 'one, yet many' of national life, and by mimicking the structures of the nation, a clearly bordered jumble of languages and styles" (2006, 49). Moreover, Brennan's description of postwar novels could very well apply to the environment surrounding the Philippine novel in English. For him, the peculiarity of post-war novels lies in the fact that they are embedded in a world characterized by a vast network of communications, "widespread politics of insurgent nationalism," and huge international cultural organizations which have made issues of nationalism and exile inform each other (2006, 62).

Brennan's ideas on both the form and the context of the novel provide a useful analytical strategy with which to examine the Philippine novels written by Filipino women from 1993-2006. Thus, I will examine how these novels objectify national life and approximate the construction of the nation (i.e., how the narrative seeks to create boundaries around multifarious languages, fragmented and dislocated lives, and contesting ideologies).

My chapters are arranged thematically. Part II, "Romancing the Nation," will focus on a novel about the different colonial eras in Philippine history. The close of the nineteenth century is one of the crucial watersheds in the history of the Philippine nation-state and this historical axis serves as the context of "More than a Passing Season: The Biological Fissures among Women in Nation Formation" on Azucena Ortega Ureana's *A Passing Season*, 2000.

Part III of the study, "Imagining and Imaging Bodies: Women in War and Peace," will discuss the predicament women face in particular historical junctures of the Philippine nation. The irony inherent in the masculinization of national identities is explored in the readings found in the following chapters: "Women Among the Ruins" on Azucena Ortega Ureana's *Women of Tammuz*, 2004 and "The Fall of Eden: EDSA's Disappointments" on Linda Ty-Casper's *Dream Eden*, 1997.

When the woman is converted into a symbol (i.e., of the nation), no matter how honorific this may be, she is not just automatically objectified but likewise exposed to the greater danger of violation. Since the female body's history is a "cultural history of male fantasies about this body" (Mintz et al. 1996, 73), one could see how the narrativization of nation as woman/female body so easily swings from positing the woman as the ideal to denigrating her as contaminated/impure. Moreover, as *Nationalism and Sexualities* asserts,

in many developing nations, the tropes of woman—nation as woman, woman as national mother, woman as an ideal of femininity, woman as dutiful daughter of the nation, bad women as good slaves to save the nation—were repeated even though cultural conditions radically differ. Despite cultural difference, these gender constructions were part of the modernizing ideology of the initial nation-states and thus an obligatory framework in the development of subsequent nation-states. (Pateman 1988, 11)

Part IV of this study, "Textualizing Woman, Nation, and History," will read some of the novels by women writers as self-reflexive constructions of the nation. "Flagging the Nation" (Pison 2006) and "Tale

Telling the Philippines: Narrativity and Nation" on Cristina Pantoja Hidalgo's *Recuerdo* and *A Book of Dreams*, respectively, "The Heart of the Nation" on Merlinda Bobis's *Banana Heart Summer*, 2006, and "The Narrativized Body and History" on Gina Apostol's *Bibliolepsy*, 1997, will be readings of four novels that problematize the nature and the writing of history and other kinds of narratives, and how women constantly negotiate their positions in the discourse of the nation. Conscious of how historical and national discourses sublate differences in order to keep the nation "intact" and stable, these novels could ultimately offer agential spaces for women.

Part V, the last part of this study, titled "Where Dangers Lie: On the Subject of Nation, Narration, and Women/Gender," will present the importance of postcolonial cultural/literary studies in the age of globalization and what these studies portend for the discourse on women vis-à-vis the discourse on the Philippine nation. The study of the seven novels will explain how these narratives, in disclosing the different facets of our nation's story, warn prophetically against any male-centered and, to an extent, even homogenizing women-centered readings of the Philippine history/nation.

In culling all the major points from the previous chapters, Part V will likewise present the following: the reasons why the novel as a narrative is a promising genre for postcolonial women writers; a summation of why cathecting the nation with the Filipino woman, as articulated in the novels, poses dangers to both the discourse on the liberation of the nation and women; and, how ultimately, "woman" in the woman-as-nation trope is a dangerous presence because the figure of the woman leads to the deconstruction of the trope itself.

Endnotes

1. Created out of a solitary act of writing and consumed through the solitary act of mute reading, the novel is nevertheless fundamentally premised on accessibility to a wider public and for this reason appears the most communal of all literary writings. Most of its practitioners belong to the middle classes, yet it seeks to speak not just of and for all these classes, but for and to the "Filipino" people. The novel is the preeminent genre through which society speaks and conceives of itself, but its concern with "imagining it whole" is routinely couched in the form and language of individual "lived experience." It is European in provenance yet charged with the task of conveying a specifically "Filipino" content. (Hau 2005a, 1)
2. Published as *Alternative Histories: Martial Law Novels as Counter-Memory* by the UP Press in 2005.

Appendix A

Novels Published in the Philippines by Philippine Women Writers (1993-2006)

- Alcasid, Wilhelmina. 1994. *The noble warriors*. Quezon City: Giraffe.
- Apostol, Gina. 1997. *Bibiolepsy*. Quezon City: The University of the Philippines Press.
- Batacan, F.H. 2002. *Smaller and smaller circles*. Quezon City: The University of the Philippines Press.
- Bobis, Merlinda. 2005. *Banana heart summer*. Pasig: Anvil Publishing Inc.
- Borinaga, Irah. 1997. *Shifting sands*. Quezon City: Giraffe.
- Cuizon, Erma. 2006. *Women in the house*. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House.
- Daroy, Ester Villando. 2002. *House of Jacob*. Quezon City: New Day.
- Hidalgo, Cristina Pantoja. 1996. *Recuerdo*. Quezon City: The University of the Philippines Press.
- . 2001. *A book of dreams*. Quezon City: The University of the Philippines Press.
- Korten, Geraldine. 1996. *Golden rain*. Quezon City: Giraffe.
- Ongsotto, Rebecca. 2002. *White rose for a stranger*. Quezon City: Giraffe.
- Skinner, Michelle. 1996. *Mango seasons*. Pasig: Anvil Publishing Inc.
- Tiempo, Edith. 1995. *One tilting leaves*. Quezon City: Giraffe.
- . 2003. *The builder*. Pasig: Anvil Publishing Inc.
- Tuvera, Katrina. 2006. *The Jupiter effect*. Pasig: Anvil Publishing Inc.
- Ty-Casper, Linda. 1996. *Dream Eden*. Quezon City: Ateneo De Manila University Press.

- . 2002. *The stranded whale*. Quezon City: Giraffe Books.
- Uranza, Azucena Grajo. 2002. *A passing season*. Quezon City: New Day.
- . 2003. *A feast of the innocents*. Makati: Bookmark, Inc.
- . 2004. *Women of Tammuz*. Makati: Bookmark, Inc.

Appendix B

Review of Related Literature

THE ANALYSIS OF THE Philippine novels under study draw on theories in the disciplines of sociology, political science, and fields like women's studies, postcolonial studies, and cultural studies, all of which intersect with theories on literature, narration, and gender/woman. Let me briefly discuss the works and studies which are extremely relevant to my study because they all dovetail with my critical project. These texts range from general theories on the nation, to the relation between nation and narration, to the more specific intermeshing of the nation, narration and gender/woman/woman's bodies. Also included is a description on history as verbal fiction and historiography as emplotment.

As a concept that emerged in the nineteenth century, the "nation" has been defined and redefined, and constantly reproblemized by sociologists, historians, philosophers, political analysts, and scholars in the field of humanities. In Ernest Renan's often quoted 1892 essay entitled "What is a Nation" (1994), he describes the different political formations in Europe and ultimately declares that a "nation is a soul, a spiritual principle," "a grand solidarity constituted by the sentiment of sacrifices." As an "aggregation of men," the nation importantly presupposes a past and continuously "renews itself especially in the present" (1994, 17-18). Interestingly, this seemingly romantic conception

of the nation is similar to Benedict Anderson's (1991) formulation of the imagined community which has become one of the favored concepts of the nation since the 1990s. The nation, according to Anderson, is "imagined" because it evokes in the minds of citizens, the "image of their communion" in the citizens' minds. Also, the formation knows the nation has "finite, if elastic boundaries" differentiating it from other nations, and thus is imagined as "limited." Thirdly, the nation emerged during a historical juncture when "divinely ordained hierarchical dynastic realm" was being questioned by ideas of the Enlightenment and therefore, it was imagined as "sovereign." Finally, the nation, despite the inequities existing in its society, "is always conceived as deep horizontal comradeship" and thus, an imagined community (Anderson 1991, 13; McCrone 1998, 6-7).

Whereas Anderson's concern is the symbolic power of the nation, Ernest Gellner's (1994) is the "integrative" function of nationalism because "it is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way around." In short, "nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist" (Gellner 1994, 64). This idea resonates with the views of Eric Hobsbawm who looks in the state as an important analytical category in order to understand the ideological construction of the "nation." In "Nation as Invented Tradition" (1994), Hobsbawm points to the constellation of discourses that constitute the nation: nationalism, national symbols, histories, and related discourses (1994, 76).

But it is not only the state that assures the perpetuation of the nation and national identity, according to Michael Billig whose essay entitled "Flagging the Homeland Daily" (2000) is of extreme importance in gaining an understanding of how peoples are reminded of their identity on a daily basis. More than national ceremonies and symbols which reiterate the people's participation in a community, it is the daily flagging of national identity that proves more influential, and if one wishes to grasp how banal nationalism works, one must thus analyze the "familiar habits of language . . . [that] continually act as reminders of nationhood" (2000, 1430).

The presuppositions on the nation discussed above suggest the unstable, and perhaps, even tenuous nature of the discourse on the nation which through the centuries have continuously elicited theorizations from scholars and critics in different disciplines. Let me briefly segue into some texts which I find very relevant in their illustration of the important relationship between the narrative and the nation. This short discussion is necessary because to the narrative has been attributed the role of not only constructing but also perpetuating the nation.

Michael Shapiro's essay entitled "National Times and Other Times: Re-Thinking Citizenship" (2000) acknowledges the narrative as an example of how texts could embody the various "co-presences homogenized by the discourse of the nation-state." Directly related to my concern is Shapiro's discussion on the novel—he refers to it as Bakhtin's "chronotope"—a form which has evolved into a genre that "articulate[s] time-space with a 'density and concreteness'" (2000, 89). The diverse set of temporalities which the novel could articulate is crucial in countering what Jurgen Habermas identifies as the "organic view of the nation" which assumes a "national solidarity" based on the belief in a "prepolitical fact of a quasi-natural people" (Habermas quoted in Shapiro 2000, 81).

Similarly, Harry Harootunian, in "Shadowing History: National Narratives and the Persistence of the Everyday" (2004) touches on the native nature (i.e., there is really nothing "natural" or "pre-ordained" in the nation) of the nation. Narration (in Harootunian's essay, this is the historical narrative) and nation serve to bring various populations together and assure civil order "through the often fictive agency of common identity and the more or less voluntary assent of the people to work and die for one's country" (2004, 184). For Jean Franco in "The Nation as Imagined Community" (2004), it is the novel as narrative which occupies a crucial position in the formation of nations in Latin America. It is the narrative afforded by the novel which provides the space where contentious issues on race, social injustice, and the clash between the urban and the rural, are worked out (2004, 130). Franco's concluding observation on the Latin American historical novel is not only thought-

provoking but also promising for my analysis of the novels by Philippine women writers. According to her, the large number of historical novels, testimonials, and chronicles by women writers cannot be taken simply as an exaltation of the cultural multiplicity of Latin America because these texts are simultaneously a way of suppressing such multiplicity. This notwithstanding, she argues that the diverse literary styles which embody the multiple discourses in Latin America "represent a political as well as an aesthetic choice, one that no longer needs the nation for its realization" (2004, 137).

Although the homogenizing effect of the discourse of the nation is attributed to its narrative nature by several scholars, Homi Bhabha ("Narrating the Nation," 1994), on the other hand, claims that the discourse of the nation is a narrative, it being "a system of cultural signification"; hence, its instability. Thus, it is necessary to explore the "janus-faced ambivalence of language" in the construction of the "janus-faced discourse of the nation" (1994, 308).

As narration intersects, or more appropriately, constitutes the nation, both are inexorably inscribed with the discourse of gender/women's bodies. When it comes to gender and nation, it is the popular essay "Women and the Nation-State" (1994) by Floya Anthias and Yuval Davis that serves as a basic reference for feminists. Warning against being reductive in reading women's position in the nation-state, Anthias and Yuval-Davis nonetheless identify the different positions occupied by women in the various ethnic and national processes vis-à-vis state policies. Women, according to them, are considered as reproducers of ethnic collectivities; reproducers of boundaries of national groups, and ideologies of collectivity; symbols of ethnic/national differences; and, participants in socioeconomic, political, and military struggles (1994, 313). In a separate but equally often-quoted study entitled *Gender and Nation* (1997), Yuval-Davis engages in a gendered and deconstructive reading of narratives of the nation and shows how women have been omitted in the nationalist discourse. Moving along similar lines is Glenda Sluga who, in her essay "Identity, Gender, and the History of European Nations and Nationalism" (2000), dwells on the link between

the evolving notions of the "sexed human body" and the "imagining of national communities," both of which are implicated in the legitimization of national boundaries and identities (2000, 1542). This integral function of gender in the construction of the nation is one of the important points raised in "Narratives of National Identity: Sexuality, Race, and the Swiss 'Dream of Order'" (1999) by Veronica Mottier. What is of paramount importance in her study is her conclusive finding that *volksnation*, as a narrative of race, is inextricably linked to sexuality and its regulation.

Like all the women critics mentioned above, Jean Bethke Elshtain uses a gendered lens in analyzing the meaning and import of "sacrifice for the *patria*" which has required both men and women to participate, although in different and gendered ways, in the formation of the nation. Her incisive analysis of war stories illustrates how war is "in a sense, a definitive test of political manhood" (2000, 1529). Elshtain's "Sovereignty, Identity, Sacrifice" (2000), a particularly rich discussion on the relationship between women, men, nation, and war, has been very useful in my readings of the war novels included in this study.

Whereas Sluga and Mottier claim that the establishment of difference between male and female bodies are politically necessary for the survival of the nation and the state, Rada Ivekovic and Julie Mostov, in *From Gender to Nation* (2006), reveal the predicament of women who are both "insiders" and "outsiders" in the discourse of the nation. This precarious position of women as explained by Ivekovic and Mostov, which is likewise foregrounded in the seven novels analyzed in this study, becomes clearer upon reading Biljana Kasic's "The Dynamic of Identification: From Archetypes to Promising Female Roles" (2006) and Krista Scott's "Imagined Bodies, Imagined Communities: Feminism, Nationalism, and Body Metaphors" (2003). Both texts, I find extremely important in understanding how the nationalist discourse has benefited from both the physical and symbolic deployment of women in the name of the nation.

Because woman and her body are generally integral to the discursive formation of the nation, Rubina Saigol points to the dangers this gives rise to: since women are equated to their nations, "communal, regional,

national, and international conflicts" are played out on women's bodies (2000, 1). Thus, in looking at how women are caught in the middle of warring nations, Brenda Gray, in her essay "The Home of Our Mothers and Our Birthright for Ages: Nation, Diaspora, and Irish Women" (1996), claims that integral to the process of colonization is the process of feminization (i.e., of colonized peoples). Jan Jindy Pettman shares this view in her two major works, "Boundary Politics: Women, Nationalism, and Danger" (1996a) and *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics* (1996b) where she elaborates on the dangers of cathecting women (read: women's bodies) with the nationalist project. Like Yuval-Davis, Pettman identifies the various forms of women's insertion into the nation-state and declares that while women's bodies are very much a part of the discourses of nationalism and International Relations, these discourses are ironically characterized by "absence of real bodies" (1996b, 213).

This same problem, one that results from using woman as symbol of the nation and one that has had material effects on women, is the focus of *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* by Cynthia Enloe (1989). Like Pettman who analyzes women in International Relations, Enloe studies women's situation in global politics and concludes that although women cannot be reduced to mere victims, they are nonetheless used by both the government and private companies for economic and political purposes.

The theses on the nation-narration-gender nexus brought forth by the critics discussed above is not new to Filipino scholars in various disciplines. Some scholars (e.g., Caroline Hau, Neferti Tadiar, Oscar Campomanes, Elizabeth Holt, Servando Halili, Vicente Rafael, Roderick Galam, Lilia Quindoza-Santiago, and Roland Tolentino, to name a few) in various fields of Philippine Studies have already embarked on the precarious undertaking of studying the nation, literature/narration, and women/gender. I refer to Hau's *On the Subject of the Nation* (2005) and "Philippine Literary Nationalism and Engendering of the Revolutionary Body" (2002), Tadiar's "People's Power: Miraculous Revolt" (2004), Campomanes's "Casualty Figures of the American Soldier and the Other: Post-1898 Allegories of Imperial Nation-Building as 'Love and

War" (2002), Holt's *Colonizing Filipinas: 19th Century Representations of the Philippines in Western Historiography* (2002), Halili's *Iconography of the New Empire: Race and Gender Images and the American Colonization of the Philippines* (2006), Rafael's "Imagination and Imagery: Filipino Nationalism in the 19th Century" (1990), Galam's "Engendering a Nation: Gender and Nationalism in Iluko Literature, 1985-1998" (2001), Quindoza-Santiago's *In the Name of the Mother: Hundred Years of Philippine Feminist Poetry* (2002), and Tolentino's *National/Transnational: Subject Formation and Media in and on the Philippines* (2001). I have found their output useful in conceptualizing my problematique.

There are also extended studies (i.e. theses and dissertations) either on the Philippine nation/history, the novel, or Filipino women in Philippine novels in English, some of which are "Narrative Maneuvers in Recontaining the Past: A Study on Linda Ty-Casper's Historical Trilogy" (1990) by Luisa Mallari; "The Nation in the Philippine Novel in English on the Revolution Against Spain and the War Against America: A Deconstructive Reading" (1990) by Teresita Sicat; "Logics of Power in Twelve Philippine Novels in English" (1999) by Raymundo Piccio; "Finding One's Voice while Using a Language which is not One's Own: The Challenge Posed to Filipino Postcolonial Women Writers: A Postcolonial Reading of Twenty-One Novels in English by Fifteen Filipino Women Novelists whose Fiction Narratives were Published in Metro Manila from 1987-1996" (2002) by Ma. Lourdes Gonzalez; "Forging a Concept of the Nation: A Study of Ten Philippine Centennial Literary Prize Novels in English and Filipino" by Shirlita Espinosa (2003); "Globalization and Becoming-Nation: Towards a Schizoanalysis of the Philippine Novel in English in the Period of Globalization" (2004) by Fernando Gonzaga IV; and "Voices from the Margins: Philippine War Novels by Women from 1992-2003 (2005) by Annette Soriano. However, there has not been a sustained analysis on a specific body of works by women writers, especially those which were written in the past decade or so. While the controversial joining of literature/narration and the nation has never failed to elicit debates, throwing in the issue of gender makes

the present study complicated. That all the novels in this study are by women writers greatly changes the framework within which narratives are usually analyzed.

These studies in the humanities, concerned as they are with different literary genres, have looked into how literature (i.e., through different institutions, both state-sponsored and otherwise) has been made part of nationalist and national projects. Perhaps the most obvious example of the narrative's profound importance in the formation of the Philippine nation is the state-sponsored Philippine Centennial Literary Prize Novels. This is the topic of Espinosa's thesis cited above which does not only clearly illustrate how literature and nationalism work together towards the formulation of the "nation" and "nationhood," but also shows how the novels actually reveal the elements that "exceed" the grasp of the state's concept of official nationalism.

The field of cultural and postcolonial studies has also witnessed great interest in rereading history vis-à-vis both political and cultural texts. In zeroing on the motivations behind American colonialism, Campomanes (2002) explains the sexual politics behind the occupation of the Philippines; that the United States in the late nineteenth century was experiencing a crisis in masculinity and that the war in the Philippines was a way of recovering "national vigor and manhood" (2002, 150). Also dissecting the American colonial discourse, Holt's "Filipinas, History, Sexuality" (2002) problematizes sexuality under the American occupation and discusses how Filipino women's bodies were fetishized as "sites for multiple contradictory beliefs in which colonizers' anxieties over sexual and racial difference functioned simultaneously with their efforts to normalize that difference" (2002, 126) by recreating in the Philippines the American bourgeois structure that policed sexuality and sexual behavior.

Focusing on the same historical period but analyzing newspaper and magazine editorials, pictorial cartoons, and caricatures, Halili's study (2006) provides a slightly different take on race, women, nation, and colonialism by looking at the dynamics between the Anglo-American and Filipino woman and how the former's body was likewise used by the

imperialist discourse (i.e., via the press) to carry out the United States' colonial policy.

Given the conventional gender/woman-nation nexus, it comes as no surprise then that the nation imagined as woman becomes inevitably the object of love. This is what critic Tadiar's essay on the EDSA "revolt" (2004) clearly posits when she says that "the experience of . . . patriotic or nationalistic love rests on the fantasy of sexual relations" (2004, 211). Sharing a similar but less sexual view of the relationship between the patriot and his nation, Rafael (1990), in describing how the patriots of the nineteenth century (e.g., Rizal and his compatriots in Spain) imagined their nation, claims that the motherland was more idolized "in proportion to [their] . . . distance to her" (1990, 6). More relevant to my study is Rafael's discussion of how this imagining is carried out; Rizal, for example, claims that the "memory of a being you [love] . . . [is] engraved (grabado) on the mother's body" (1990, 6). Although the Filipino woman was Inang Bayan to the patriots and heroes during the Philippine colonial times, she was not always a figure of passivity, awaiting deliverance from the colonizers. This is the thesis of another Rafael essay, "White Love: Census and Melodrama in the U.S. Colonization in the Philippines" (2000) which points out that notwithstanding the feminine construction of the nation in seditious plays staged during the American period, gender stereotypes were unstable categories which were deeply imbricated in cultural notions of kinship, the realities of war, and the "absence of a stable patriarchal state" (2000, 50).

But the woman/nation/Inang Bayan was not always the object of the patriot's love, as Hau's "Philippine Literary Nationalism and Engendering of the Revolutionary Body" (2002) proves. Illustrating this point in her analysis of Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere*, she explains the ambiguous position of women vis-à-vis nationalist discourse where the self-sacrifice of the patriot entails "redirecting men's passions and channeling them into a higher, nationalist purpose" (2002, 59); self-sacrifice—exemplified by the disciplined patriotic body—is only possible when the male patriot gives up women, marriage, and marital bliss.

The "invisibility" of women in the nationalist discourse is what inspired Galam to "look" for the Filipino woman in the discourse of the nation as articulated in literary texts. In both his thesis, "Engendering a Nation: Gender and Nationalism in Iloko Literature, 1985-1988" (2001a) and short article, "Re-membering Women into the Nation: Discourses of Gender, Nation and Nationalism in the Poetry of Hermilinda Lingbagan-Bulong" (2001b), Galam discusses the semanticization of the nation which has relegated women to the role of the feminine Inang Bayan in contrast to citizens/men and the state which has been assigned, the masculine role of agency. Cultural texts such as the novels and poems analyzed by Galam are rich sources of imaginings of the nation and women's location in these texts' constructions of the Philippine nation. Quindoza-Santiago's book (2002), although not a pointed discussion on how women are implicated in the nation, is an important source of feminist thought in the Philippines (e.g., the distinctions we make between *babae*, *pagkababae*, and *kababaihan* and the historical context that gave rise to them) and how this is expressed in Iloco, Tagalog, and English poetry.

So far, what has been presented are discussions on the more conventional imaginings of the nation as woman, those which are embedded in the official versions of nationalism. Any discussion on the figure of the Filipino woman as motherland, though, cannot not include the millenarian discourse on the nation. Apparently still considered "folk" and therefore not compatible with the modern nation-state's political governance, the writings of the kapatirans or spiritual brotherhoods remain valuable sources of a particular people's consciousness that cathects the nation with woman, and in some instances, with woman's body. For "alternative" ideas on the nation and woman, we can rely on Consolacion Alaras's *Pamathalaan: Ang Pagbubukas sa Tipan ng Mahal na Ina* (1988), which painstakingly elaborates on the complex "cosmological system" of the Philippines' numerous kapatirans. Whereas the woman as Mother/Virgin Mary/Motherland in other discourses remains on the symbolic level, the woman as Mother/Virgin Mary/Motherland in the discourse of the kapatirans takes a more physical configuration. She does

not only symbolically embody the nation, but in a very corporeal way, also arrogates unto herself, several identities and beings all crucial to paving the way for the establishment of the spiritual government. Nenita Pambid Domingo likewise grasps the complexity and nuances of the figure of Inang Bayan. Her "*Dios Ina* (God the Mother) and Philippine Nationalism" (2006) covers the figure of the Dios Ina in the millenarian discourse and the various incarnations of Dios Ina and the Inang Bayan at different times of Philippine history. Domingo's and Alaras's works are pivotal in my analysis because the figure of woman as nation in the novels occupies a range of positions; given the cultural matrix in which these narratives are embedded and from which Filipino writers draw the various elements that constitute their novels, the figure of woman as Inang Bayan, motherland, Dios Ina, and its multiple mutations will definitely have to be taken into account.

Also, to the different conceptions of the Philippine nation discussed above, we must add critic Neil Garcia's "Knowledge, Sexuality, and the Nation-State" (2003) which, after showing how "selfhood," gender, and nation are constructed and interarticulated with each other, asserts that the performance of nation-ness in the Philippines, as it is characterized by particular dynamics between gendered and national identities, will definitely be different from the performance of nations in another part of the world (2003, 13).

The metaphorical use of woman as nation has not only interested scholars in the fields of postcolonial studies and cultural studies. Of course, those in women's studies have long problematized the seemingly "natural" link between the Philippine nation and the Filipino woman. These scholars have likewise explored the polysemous concept of Inang Bayan and how this has been used by the state for different purposes.

Also teasing out the multivalent meanings of woman-as-nation is *Mga Ina ng Bayan: Life Stories of Filipino and Japanese Community Leaders* (2002) by Amaryllis Torres, Marlene de la Cruz, and Thelma Magcuro. Their study focuses on women from the grassroots/community leaders who, in caring for poor communities, have actually assumed the nurturing role of "*mga ina ng bayan*" (2002, 51).

The figure of the Inang Bayan who embodies the women Overseas Contract Workers has been conveniently deployed by the Philippine government in the past decades. Although the term "Inang Bayan" is not used by Rhacel Salazar Parrenas in her *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work* (2001), she nonetheless explains the similar concept of "diverted mothering" which I find very important in understanding the gendered system of transnational capitalism and how women's bodies are deployed in the international division of labor. Marianne Marchand and Anne Sisson Runyan's *Gender and Global Restructuring* (2000) likewise provides a gendered reading of the masculine neoliberal discourse on globalization which has curiously resulted in the conflicted and conflicting engenderings of the Philippine state.

It is precisely the "interfacing" between the national and the transnational and how women are positioned in this dynamics, which Roland Tolentino focuses on in *National/Transnational: Subject Formation and Media in and on the Philippines* (2001). It is the last group of essays in the collection which I find relevant to my study because they reveal how contemporary Asia Pacific films, in their aim to construct national and regional spaces, have actually unwittingly "implicated the Philippines and Filipino bodies" (2001, 147).

Aside from the studies cited above which I find related and useful to my project, there is another important work which is integral to the analyses I will be doing. The teasing out of how woman is embedded in the discourse of the nation inscribed in the narrative of the novels is predicated on the principles raised by Hayden White in his essay "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" (2001) in which he elaborates some of the themes he had earlier brought up in an article entitled "The Structure of the Historical Narrative" (1972). The former is pivotal in our apprehension of the relationship between literature and history. Although White, through his metahistory, recognizes the research done in addressing issues such as the structure of historical consciousness, the epistemological status of historical explanations, the "different forms of historical representation" and their bases, and the authority which

historical accounts could claim (2001, 1712), he laments the fact that not much has been done to examine the historical narrative as "verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much *invented* as *found* and the forms of which have more in common with the counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences" (2001, 1713).

White's insights enlighten us on the nature of history not just as a documentation of "facts" about the past but as providing readers with an "explanatory effect," one which is a result of how history makes "stories out of *mere* chronicles. [A]nd stories in turn are made out of chronicles by an operation which . . . [is] called 'emplotment'" (2001, 1714). "Emplotment," as an important component of history, is defined by White as "the encodation of the facts contained in the chronicle as components of specific kinds of plot structures . . ." which takes off from what Northrop Frye had earlier identified in "fictions in general" (i.e., White takes off from Frye's archetypal analysis when White suggests four kinds of emplotment: tragic, comic, romantic, and ironic) (2001, 1714). In the process of emplotment, what comes out are historical narratives that

are not only models of past events and processes, but also metaphorical statements which suggest a relation of similitude between such events and processes and the story types that we conventionally use to endow the events of our lives with culturally sanctioned meanings. Viewed in a purely formal way, a historical narrative is not only a *reproduction* of the events reported in it, but also a *complex of symbols* which gives us directions for finding an icon of the structure of those events in our literary tradition. (2001, 1718)

One cannot miss the importance of White's description of what happens in emplotment. The historical narrative, he explains, like poetry and philosophies of history, is a "system of signs pointing to two directions simultaneously: toward the events described in the narrative and toward the story type or mythos which the historian has chosen to serve as the icon of the structure of the events" (2001, 1719). Interestingly, White unequivocally declares that histories must not be read as "unambiguous

signs of the events they report" because as "symbolic structures" and "extended metaphors," they "liken" the events in their narratives to "some form with which we have already become familiar with in our literary culture" (2001, 1721). And as such, this metaphorical function of history stands as a symbol which "does not give us either a *description* or an *icon* of the thing it represents, but tells us what images to look for in our culturally encoded experience in order to determine how we *should feel* about the thing represented" (2001, 1721).

Despite the objections to White's metahistory (i.e., historians feel that White reduces history to language while poststructuralist critics reject his structuralist approach which has simplified the narrative into four master tropes), his assertions have served as the conceptual scaffolding of later scholars not only in the field of cultural history but also in the field of literature. It is his lucid elaboration on the nature of the historical narrative that informs the analysis of the novels in my study. His ideas on the undeniable "literary" elements of history provide us with a strong foothold in making claims on how narratives are, in more ways than one, problematizations of history and historiography.

In my study, I demonstrated how the seven novels by Philippine women writers reveal not only the fictive element in history writing but also the dangers of embedding woman in the discourse of the nation. The analysis of the seven novels which are haunted by the historical specter of the nation also pointed to how, in these narratives, the Philippine nation/history is inextricably linked to gender/women/women's bodies. This nexus, though seemingly seductive for the Filipino women who have been made to symbolize the Philippines, as this study has shown, is far from being uncomplicated and unproblematic.

Appendix C

Covers of *Dream Eden* and *Recuerdo*

